

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 SSM-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 558
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 547

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: IS EG JO XF
SUBJ: FORMER PM RABIN ON CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

1. SUMMARY: RABIN FEELS THAT THE NAMES OF THE MILITARY
AND POLITICAL COMMITTEES ARE MISLEADING; THE COMMITTEES
WILL DISCUSS BILATERAL ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS AND
WIDER MIDDLE EAST SUBJECT, RESPECTIVELY. HE IS
OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE COURSE OF NEGOTIATIONS BECAUSE BOTH
SADAT AND BEGIN ARE COMMITTED TO SUCCESS AND CANNOT
RETREAT BECAUSE OF THEIR PUBLICS. HE VIEWS THE RECENT
SETTLEMENTS ACTIVITY AS UNNECESSARILY COMPLICATING
NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT. HE COUNTS HIMSELF AMONG THOSE
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ISRAELIS WHO CONSIDER THAT SADAT HAS NO MILITARY OPTION
BUT HE FEELS THAT THE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED BY SADAT'S
VISIT TO JERUSALEM HAS ALREADY BEGUN TO ERODE. END SUMMARY

2. IN A WIDERANGING DISCUSSION OF THE CURRENT
SITUATION, FORMER PRIME MINISTER RABIN DISPLAYED HIS
CONTINUING ABILITY TO ANALYZE EVENTS FROM A BROAD

PERSPECTIVE. FOR EXAMPLE, HE SAID THAT IN HIS VIEW, BOTH THE AMERICAN AND THE ISRAELI PUBLIC MISUNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF THE CAIRO AND JERUSALEM DISCUSSIONS AND ARE BEING MISLED BY THE TITLES OF THE TWO COMMITTEES. THE MILITARY COMMITTEE, IN SPITE OF ITS NAME, WILL BE DISCUSSING THE BILATERAL ISSUES BETWEEN ISRAEL AND EGYPT; THIS IS ILLUSTRATED, HE SAID, BY THE FACT THAT THE FIRST ITEM FOR DISCUSSION WILL BE ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE NORTHERN SINAI. THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING IN JERUSALEM ON THE OTHER HAND, WILL DEVOTE ITS TIME TO A DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEMS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND ITS NEIGHBORS AS A GROUP. THIS WILL BE THE VENUE FOR DISCUSSIONS OF THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM AND THE FUTURE OF THE WEST BANK.

3. RABIN SAID HE WAS GENERALLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE COURSE OF NEGOTIATIONS AND PREDICTED THERE WILL BE "SOME KIND OF AGREEMENT." HE SAID THE NEGOTIATIONS WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL BECAUSE BOTH PRIME MINISTER BEGIN AND PRESIDENT SADAT ARE IRREVOCABLY COMMITTED TO SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATIONS AND BECAUSE THEY CANNOT RETREAT FROM THE POSITIONS THEY HAVE ALREADY ADOPTED. THE INABILITY TO RETREAT ARISES BECAUSE OF THE PUBLICS TO WHICH THE TWO LEADERS MUST CATER: THE ARAB WORLD FOR SADAT AND ISRAEL PUBLIC OPINION FOR BEGIN.

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4. IN RABIN'S VIEW, THE BEGIN PROPOSAL MUST UNDERGO FURTHER MODIFICATION BEFORE IT CAN PROVIDE A BASIS FOR ADDRESSING THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM. A STABLE SOLUTION TO THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE MUST PROVIDE FOR SOME FORM OF DIRECT PARTICIPATION BY THE PALESTINIANS THEMSELVES IN THE EVOLUTION OF FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS, WHILE STILL MEETING THE SECURITY CONCERNS OF BOTH ISRAEL AND JORDAN. HE ALSO THOUGHT THE TIME-FRAME INVOLVED MIGHT HAVE TO BE SUBSTANTIALLY MORE THAN THE FIVE YEARS CURRENTLY BEING DISCUSSED. ON PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION, HOWEVER, HE STRESSED THAT NO ISRAELI GOVERNMENT COULD OFFER SELF-DETERMINATION IN ITS PUREST FORM AND SURVIVE, SINCE THIS WOULD INEVITABLY BE VIEWED AS LEADING TO AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE.

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5. RABIN SAID THAT THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION
OF THE NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE JORDANIAN PARTICIPATION.
JORDAN IS NEEDED IN THE DISCUSSIONS TO ENABLE SADAT
TO SATISFY THE DEMANDS FROM THE OTHER ARAB
STATES FOR PROGRESS. BEGIN IS AWARE THAT JORDAN IS
NECESSARY BUT HE IS THUS FAR GIVING HUSSEIN NO INDUCE-
MENT SUFFICIENT TO BRING HIM INTO THE TALKS. THE PRI-
MARY FACTOR IN THIS REGARD WILL BE BEGIN'S ABILITY TO
COME TO GRIPS WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF THE ULTIMATE
DIVISIBILITY OF FORMER PALESTINE. RABIN SAID HE WAS
PERSONALLY FAMILIAR WITH JORDANIAN OPINION: "I KNOW
HUSSEIN'S VIEWS" AND CLEARLY IMPLIED BUT REFUSED TO
CONFIRM THAT HE HAD PERSONALLY MET WITH HUSSEIN.
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6. RABIN FELT THAT RECENT SETTLEMENTS ACTIVITY IN
THE NORTHERN SINAI AND MEDIA ATTENTION TO THOSE DEVELOP-
MENTS WOULD NOT PREVENT PROGRESS IN THE NEGOTIATIONS
WITH EGYPT BUT HE CONSIDERED THIS ACTIVITY TO HAVE
BEEN ENTIRELY UNNECESSARY AND SHOULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED

BECAUSE IT WOULD REQUIRE THE EGYPTIANS TO ADOPT A PUBLIC POSTURE CRITICAL OF ISRAEL. HE TOOK A MORE CYNICAL VIEW OF SETTLEMENTS IN THE WEST BANK; HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S COMPROMISE WITH THE GUSH EMUNIM PERMITTING SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY ONLY WITHIN MILITARY INSTALLATIONS WILL SIMPLY MEAN THAT THE GUSH WILL ESTABLISH NEW SETTLEMENTS AND BARBED WIRE WILL THEN BE PUT UP AROUND THOSE SETTLEMENTS TO MAKE THEM MILITARY CAMPS.

7. REGARDING THE NATURE OF THE ACCOMMODATION TO BE REACHED IN THE SINAI. RABIN PREDICTED THAT EGYPT WILL NOT ACCEPT COMPLETE DEMILITARIZATION AND SAID THAT THIS HAS BEEN MADE CLEAR BY PREVIOUS EGYPTIAN STATEMENTS. HOWEVER, HE FELT EGYPT WOULD BE ABLE TO ACCEPT BUFFER ZONES. HE SAID THAT IN HIS OPINION SADAT IS NEGOTIATING FROM WEAKNESS BECAUSE HE HAS NO VIABLE MILITARY OPTION AND WILL NOT HAVE FOR SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE. BECAUSE OF THIS ISRAEL HAS BEEN PRESENTED WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO REACH AN ACCOMMODATION WITH ITS SOUTHERN NEIGHBOR. HOWEVER, HE FELT THE OPPORTUNITY HAS ALREADY BEGUN TO ERODE. FOR EXAMPLE, BEGIN COULD HAVE GIVEN AWAY SETTLEMENTS LAST MONTH OR COULD HAVE MADE OTHER FAR-REACHING CONCESSIONS AND THE ISRAELI PUBLIC WOULD HAVE ACCEPTED THEM. HOWEVER, THE ISRAELI PUBLIC WILL NOT ACCEPT FAILURE OF THE DISCUSSIONS WITH EGYPT AND BEGIN SHOULD NOT BELIEVE THAT HE WILL BE ABLE TO PUT
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THE BLAME FOR SUCH FAILURE ON THE ARABS. RABIN REMARKED RUEFULLY THAT "YOU CANNOT FOOL THE ISRAELI PUBLIC VERY LONG."

8. COMMENT: RABIN OBVIOUSLY REMAINS WELL INFORMED ABOUT CURRENT EVENTS AND HAS RETAINED HIS ABILITY, FOR WHICH HE WAS WELL-KNOWN THROUGHOUT HIS CAREER, TO ANALYZE DEVELOPMENTS OBJECTIVELY AND DISPASSIONATELY. HE HAD VERY LITTLE TO SAY ABOUT THE CURRENT STATE OF THE LABOR PARTY OR ITS LEADERSHIP, OTHER THAN TO SAY THAT HE DISAGREED WITH PERES ON A NUMBER OF POINTS. RABIN CLEARLY IMPLIED THAT THE CAIRO MILITARY COMMITTEE, WITH ITS EMPHASIS ON BILATERAL ISSUES BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, WILL BE THE MECHANISM WITH WHICH THE TWO COUNTRIES WILL PROCEED TO WORK OUT A BILATERAL AGREEMENT. IN CONTRAST TO HIS USUAL RETICENCE, RABIN SPOKE WITH AN EXPANSIVENESS THAT SEEMED TO REFLECT RELIEF AT NO LONGER HAVING TO SHOULDER THE BURDENS OF OFFICIAL RESPONSIBILITY. LEWIS

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